

SPORTS

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Wacky play helps Knights beat Austin

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Here's another reason why baseball is such a special game: it can turn a mundane play into a game-changing play.

Take for example, a strikeout turning into a three-run scoring play.

In something more rare than a triple play, Elkins scored three runs in the eighth inning on a strikeout to beat Austin 8-5 and force a four-way tie for first in District 23-5A. The Bulldogs, who were unbeaten in district play heading into Thursday night's game

With two men on and one out with the game tied at five, Elkins second baseman Drew Vest faced a 2-2 count to Austin reliever Ryan Dalton throws one in the dirt while Vest swings and misses. As catcher Drew Miller chases down the ball, Vest runs to first base, but Miller's throw is way too high for first baseman Benn Fairbanks and sailed to the outfield. That scored Jordan Jolly from third.

But Vest rounded first too much, and was caught in a rundown between first and second base. That allowed Gevon Jackson to round second and third and beat the throw home to score the second run. Then as Vest reached second, he saw no-

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Elkins coach

body covering third base. After beating Miller, who ran from home plate to try to make the tag, Vest took a lead and saw no one was covering home, and he beat the throw home to score the third run, making it a three-run strikeout.

"Myself and my assistant were saying that in all of our years, we have never seen a more productive strikeout," Elkins coach Richard Thistlewaite said. "I would like to take credit for it, but I can't. That was all Drew Vest.

"I had no hand in that except saying, 'Run, run, run!'"

Vest's heady play helped the Knights pull out the win, while the play frustrated Austin, who committed four errors in the game.

"We were making poor throws, poor execution, poor rundowns," Austin coach Randy Urserly said. "We absolutely played like we didn't want to be here. We've got to regroup and refocus and get ready for Kempner (on Tuesday)."

Elkins took control of the game early, as pitcher Travis Crow helped the Knights at the plate and on the mound, as he went 3-for-3 with three doubles and three runs scored, as well as holding the Bulldogs to six hits and three earned runs in six innings work.

Austin rallied in the sixth inning to tie the game. RBI singles by Tony Gigliotti and Aaron Marcynuk helped the Bulldogs tie the game.

The game had an ominous start when in the bottom of the first, Austin outfielder Daniel Rockett injured his ankle trying to beat out a throw to first. After being helped to the dugout, Rockett passed out. The game was delayed for a half-hour as medical personnel was called and arrived to tend to the conscious Rockett.

With the win, the district race is very tight, with Austin, Clements, Elkins and Kempner all with 4-1 records. That sets up a big game on Tuesday, as the Bulldogs travel to Kempner, while Elkins hosts an always tough Hightower squad.

"This is a race to 12, because 12 wins will get you into the playoffs," Thistlewaite said. "Everytime we step on the field, we talk about winning the next game and the race to 12. Win or lose tonight, our season is still in our hands, and I'm glad how our kids responded."



Photo by GREG PIERSON

Austin shortstop Scott Viktorin forces out Elkins runner Richard Arroyo in Thursday night's game. The Knights beat the Bulldogs 8-5.